

January 5, 2021

Dear Commissioner Key:

Thank you for all you continue to do to address the needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your efforts have been critical to ensuring that learning continues for all students as your State faces unprecedented education challenges.

As you know, the U.S. Department of Education awarded more than \$13 billion last spring in assistance to elementary and secondary schools through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund authorized by the *Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. On December 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021*, Public Law 116-260, which provides an additional \$54.3 billion for an ESSER II Fund.

Today, the Department is announcing an additional \$558,017,409 in ESSER II funds to Arkansas. This new funding—more than four times the initial awards to State educational agencies under the CARES Act—is intended to help States and school districts safely reopen schools, measure and effectively address significant learning loss, and take other actions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the students and families who depend on our K-12 schools.

Consistent with Congressional intent to provide new funding quickly and with minimal administrative burden, you are not required to submit an additional application to receive your ESSER II award. Within the next three days, you will receive a Grant Award Notification (GAN) through the federal grants management system (G5), which provides the ESSER II grant award and details its terms and conditions.

Although the ESSER II uses of funds are similar to those for ESSER, there are important distinctions between the ESSER II and ESSER programs, including the period of funds availability, equitable services to non-public schools, maintenance of effort, and a report on efforts to measure and address learning loss. You should plan to use all remaining ESSER funds *before* making use of the ESSER II funds, given the shorter remaining period of availability. Please consult the attached fact sheet to learn more about the ESSER II program.

Once again, I urge you to use the ESSER and ESSER II funding to safely re-open all elementary and secondary schools as soon as possible, to restore and maintain high-quality learning environments, and to take comprehensive action to mitigate the unprecedented learning loss that many of our most vulnerable students have endured. I know these have been extraordinarily challenging times for both educators and administrators, but we must rise to meet this challenge. Most of our children today would be far better off in school with in-person instruction. There is no excuse that so many of them are still locked out. Families and students, particularly our nation's most vulnerable, are depending on your leadership.

We have attached a table that shows State allocations for the ESSER II Fund. These allocations are based on the proportion of funds that each State received under Part A of Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* in fiscal year 2020.

Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of students in your State.

Sincerely,

Betsy DeVos

Attachments